

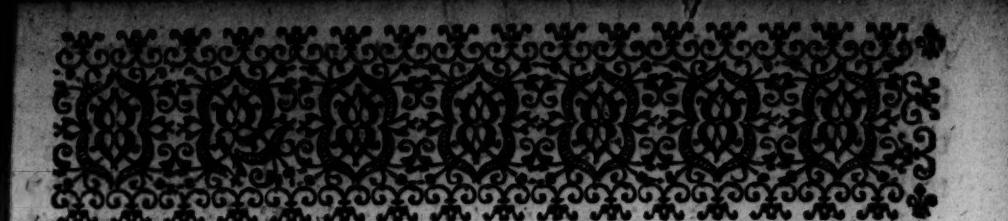
THE
State of Religion
AMONG
The Protestant DISSENTERS
IN
VIRGINIA;
In a LETTER
To the Rev. Mr. *Joseph Bellamy*,
of *Bethlem*, in *New-England*:
From the Reverend
Mr. SAMUEL DAVIES, V.D.M.
in *Hanover County, Virginia.*

*As cold Water to a thirsty Soul, so is good News from a
far Country.* SOLOMON, Prov. 25. 25.

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A L E T T E R, &c.

Reverend and dear Sir,

IF the Publication of a Narrative of the
Rise, Progress and present Situation of
Religion in *Virginia*, may not only gra-
tify good People, but (as you give me
Reason to hope) animate their Prayers
for us, and also encourage Preachers to come into
these Parts ; I should charge my self with a crimi-
nal Neglect, did I deprive this Colony of these Blessings,
by delaying or refusing to publish the marvellous Works
of the Lord among us. Such Matters are liable to
Misrepresentations ; and I doubt not but the State of
Religion in these Parts has suffered the same Fate with
other Facts reported by common Fame, and been mag-
nified or diminished to you. I shall therefore, Sir, with
as much Brevity and Accuracy as the Case and my Cir-
cumstances will allow, give you *an Account of the State*
of Religion among the Protestant Dissenters in Virginia,
not only in my Congregation in *Hanover*, but also in
the Frontier Counties of this Colony, which are gene-
rally inhabited by Dissenters ; which, after Perusal, you
may present to the Publick, or doom to Oblivion, as
your Prudence will direct. I look upon my self under
the most sacred Obligations to maintain the strictest Re-
gard to Matter of Fact in my Narrative : and as my
Residence in *Hanover* above three Years, and my Itine-

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rations among the vacant Congregations in the Frontier Counties, have furnished me with peculiar Opportunities of Information, my Misrepresentations would be the more inexcusable.

My Design Sir, is not to inform the World of my petty personal Concerns, to boast of Proselytes, or to asperse the Church of *England* here established ; and therefore, to avoid Suspicions, I must suppress sundry Particulars that might be proper to mention in the Freedoms of amicable Conversation, but are not to be trusted to the Candour of a censorious World ; and I have always tho't it an Instance of Imprudence pregnant with mischievous Consequences, when Persons in such Cases unbosom themselves to Mankind in general, with the unguarded Liberties of intimate Friendship.

It will not probably be worth while to give you any further Geographical Account of *Hanover County*, where the late Revival of Religion began, than that it is situated, I think, pretty near the Centre of *Virginia* ; is a flourishing County, and generally very healthy to Persons from all Nations ; which I mention Sir, to remove your Scruple, " Whether this Climate agrees with the " Constitution of *New-England Men* ?"

I hope I may observe without the Umbrage of Calumny, what glares with irresistible Evidence on the Eyes of the Serious of all Denominations among us, that Religion has been, and in most Parts of the Colony still is, in a very low State. A surprizing Negligence appears in attending on publick Worship ; and an equally surprizing Levity & Unconcernedness in those that attend. Family-Religion is a Rarity, and a solemn Solicitude about eternal Things is still a greater. Vices of various Kinds are triumphant, and even a *Form of Godliness* is not common. The Clergy universally, as far as my Intelligence extends, have embraced the modish System of *Arminian Divinity*, (tho' I allow my self the Pleasure to hope there are sundry conscientious Persons among them) and

and the *Calvinistic*, or rather *PAULINE* Articles of their own Church are counted horrendous and insufferable.— But I suppose universal Fame has superseded my Information ; and therefore I willingly exempt my self from the disagreeable Task.

I cannot find there has been a dissenting Minister settled in *Virginia*, 'till lately, since its first Plantation. You no doubt remember what Dr. *Mather*, and Mr. *Neal* from him, relate of the sending of Messirs. *James*, *Knowles*, and *Thomson* into it from *New-England*, at the Invitation of sundry of its Inhabitants, above a Hundred Years ago ; and of their being compelled to depart the Colony by the Governour's Order, after preaching a few Sermons : * Since which, there have been hardly any Attempts made to obtain such Ministers, 'till a few Years ago ; and many of the Populace knew little or nothing of any Denomination, but that in which they had been educated.

I have Reason to hope Sir, there are and have been a few *Names* in various Parts of the Colony, who are sincerely seeking the Lord, and groping after Religion, in the Communion of the Church of *England* ; which I charitably presume from my finding there were a few of this happy Character in & about *Hanover* before the late Revival of Religion. Such were awakened, as they have told me, either by their own serious Reflections, suggested and enforced by divine Energy ; or on reading some Authors of the last Century, particularly *Bolton*, *Baxter*, *Flavel*, *Bunyan*, &c. Some of them were wont to attend on publick Worship in the established Church without much murmuring at the Entertainments there ; tho' they were sensible these were vastly inferior to what past Ages were favoured with, and often wondered if there were such Doctrines taught any where in the World at present, as they found in the Writings

* See *Neal's Hist. of N.England*, Vol. I. p. 220. sub an. 1642.

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Writings of these good Men. Others of them, tho' they had no Objections against the Ceremonies of the Church of *England*, except a few who were shocked at the impracticable Obligations imposed upon the Sponsors in Baptism, were utterly dissatisfied with the usual Doctrines taught from the Pulpit. Tho' these were generally true, and would have been useful, in their Connection with the Scheme of evangelical Doctrines ; yet so many necessary Truths were neglected, as rendered those that were inculcated of very little Service. The whole System of what is distinguished by the Name of *experimental Religion*, was past over in Silence. The *Depravity of humane Nature*, the *Necessity of Regeneration*, and it's *Pre-requisites*, *Nature* and *Effects*, the various *Exercises* of pious Souls according to their several Cases, &c. these were omitted ; and without these, you know Sir, the finest Declamations on moral Duties or speculative Truths, will be but wretched Entertainment to hungry Souls. Such a maim'd System is not the compleat Religion of JESUS, that glories in the amiable *Symmetry*, mutual *Dependency* and *Subserviency* of all its Doctrines, as its peculiar Characteristic. Had the *whole Counsel of God* been declared, had all the Doctrines of the Gospel been solemnly and faithfully preached in the established Church ; I am perswaded there would have been but few Dissenters in these Parts of *Virginia* ; for, as I observed, their first Objections were not against the peculiar *Rites & Ceremonies* of that Church, much less against her excellent *Articles* ; but against the general Strain of the *Doctrines* delivered from the Pulpit, in which these Articles were opposed, or (which was the more common Case) *not mentioned at all* : so that at first they were not properly *Dissenters* from the original Constitution of the Church of *England*, but the most strict *Adherents* to it, and only dissented from those that had forsaken it, tho' they still usurped the Denomination. But tho' such Impartiality in preaching the

Gospel

Gospel might have prevented the Advancement of the Interest of the Dissenters as a Party, it would have tended to promote the infinitely more valuable Interests of the blessed Redeemer : and had this been the Case, our Zeal and Industry to convert them to *Presbyterianism*, would have been almost superfluous, and quite disproportioned.— And here Sir, it may be proper to observe, That when in this Narrative I speak of the Increase of Dissenters in these Parts with an Air of Satisfaction, I do not boast of them as meer *Captures* from the Church of *England*, but as hopefully *sincere Proselites to living Religion*, or at least as lying open to Conviction, and in the Way of more profitable Means. I cannot indeed but conscientiously dissent from some of the Peculiarities of that Church ; and it tends a little to heighten our Satisfaction, when such as agree with us in *Essentials*, and appear truly pious, do also agree with us in *Circumstantials* ; for as Agreement is the Foundation and Measure of social Love, *this* must be co-extended with *that* : Yet as I am fully perswaded *the Kingdom of God is not Meat & Drink, but Righteousness and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost* ; and that Persons of superior Piety and Judgment have used these Rites and Ceremonies with Approbation ; I think the Alteration of Men's Principles and Practice with Respect to these Things *only*, without being born again of God, is a wretched Conversion ; and it would inspire me with much greater Joy to see a *pious Church-man*, than a *graceless Presbyterian*. I cheerfully embrace the Sentiments of that illustrious Divine Mr. Howe, † “ *That without the Effusion of the Spirit from high,*” to fashion the Hearts of Men into a Conformity to the blessed God, and to prepare them for a happy Immortality, “ *it matters little, and signifies to me scarce one Straw,*” “ *what Party of us is uppermost :* The most Righteous,

(as

† See *Howe's Works*, Vol. II. p. 474.

(as they may be vogu'd) will be but as Bryars & scratching
Thorns; and it is better to suffer by such, than to be of them." The chief Reason Sir, why I call upon you to congratulate the Increase of the Diffenters here, and rejoice in it my self, is, because I have Ground to hope that the Number of the Heirs of Heaven is augmented in some Proportion, tho' alas ! not to an Equality ; and to triumph on inferior Accounts, would argue the narrow Genius of a Bigot.—— But to return.

The Few that profess'd a Dissatisfaction with the general Strain of Preaching in Church, and therefore either absented themselves, or attended with Murmuring and Reluctance, were generally counted whimsical Creatures, and hypocritical Affectors of Singularity : and indeed they could not but own their Sentiments singular ; for they knew of none in the present Age of the same Mind with them ; and therefore had no Prospect of obtaining a Minister to preach to them those Doctrines they thirsted for. Their Notions, as far as I can learn, were found in the main; tho' intermix'd with some corrupt Notions verging towards Antinomianism, the opposite Extreme to that they had left. And tho' this rendered them more odious to their Adversaries, and furnished them with Occasions more plausibly to expose them ; yet, considering their Circumstances as being destitute of a judicious Minister to instruct them in the Doctrines of the Gospel, and caution them against Mistakes ; and as labouring under the Prejudices of Education, and transported with the Sallies of their first Zeal, which is generally imprudent and wild ; I am more surprized at their Soundness and Regularity in most Things, than at their Mistakes and Extravagancies in a few.

In this Case about ten or twelve Persons who are now Members of my Congregation, had been for some Time before the Revival of Religion which began in the Year 1743. One Mr. Samuel Morris (for I am not ashamed publicly to mention his Name, notwithstanding the Calumnies

Calumnies flung upon it by many) a Person of a forward, sociable Spirit, who had for some Time been extremely anxious about his eternal State, & unweariedly seeking Relief by all Means within his Reach, at length obtain'd a Discovery of that glorious Method of Salvation thro' Jesus Christ, to which Sinners from all the Ends of the Earth look, and are saved, and where they universally agree to fix all their Hopes, notwithstanding the great Diversity of their Circumstances as to Situation, Education, outward Instruction, &c. The distinct Relation he has given me of his Exercises at that Time and since, and the prevailing Piety of his common Behaviour, leave me no Room to be anxious about the Sincerity of his Religion ; tho', as it is common in such Cases, his former pious Zeal to do Good, with a few very pardonable Imprudences that attended it, have fix'd an indelible *Odium* on his Character among many who opposed the religious Concern he attempted to promote. After this Discovery of the Gospel, his Soul was anxious for the Salvation of his Neighbours, and inflamed with Zeal to use Means to awaken them. This was the Tendency of his Conversation ; and he also read to them such Authors as had been most useful to him, particularly *Luther's Comment upon the Galatians*, which first opened to him the Way of Justification thro' Christ alone, and his *Table-Discourses*, sundry Pieces of honest *Bunyan's* &c. By those Means a few of his Neighbours were made more tho'tful about Religion than usual, and doubtful they had lived 'till then in a careless Ignorance of it ; but the Concern was not very extensive.

I have prevailed, Sir, on my good Friend before mentioned, who was the principal private Instrument of promoting the late Work, and therefore well acquainted with it, to write me a Narrative of its Rise & Progress from this Period 'till my Settlement here : and this, together with the Substance of what he and others have told me, I shall present to you without any material

Alterations, and personate him, tho' I shall not exactly use his Words.

" The Reverend Mr. Whitefield had been in *Virginia*,
 " I think, in the Year 1740, and at the Invitation of
 " the Rev. Mr. Blair, our late Commissary, had preached
 " in *Williamsburg*, our Metropolis, about 60 Miles from
 " *Hanover*. His Fame was much spread abroad, as a very
 " warm and alarming Preacher; which made such of
 " us in *Hanover* as had been awakened, very eager to
 " see & hear him; 'but as he left the Colony before we
 " heard of him, we had no Opportunity. But in the Year
 " —43, a young Gentleman arrived from *Scotland* with
 " a Book of his Sermons preached in *Glasgow*, & taken
 " from his Mouth in short Hand, which with Difficulty I
 " procured. After I had read it with great Liking & Bene-
 " fit, I invited my Neighbours to come & hear it; and the
 " Plainness, Popularity, & Fervency of the Discourses,
 " being peculiarly fitted to affect our unimproved Minds,
 " and the Lord rendring the Word efficacious, many
 " were convinced of their undone Condition, and
 " constrained to seek Deliverance with the greatest So-
 " licitude. A considerable Number convened every
 " Sabbath to hear these Sermons, instead of going to
 " Church, and frequently on Week Days. The Con-
 " cern of some was so passionate and violent, that they
 " could not avoid crying out, weeping bitterly, &c. and
 " that when such Indications of religious Concern were
 " so strange and ridiculous, that they could not be oc-
 " casioned by Example or Sympathy, and the Affecta-
 " tion of them would have been so unprofitable an In-
 " stance of Hypocrisy, that none could be tempted to
 " it. My Dwelling-House at length was too small to
 " contain the People; whereupon we determined to
 " build a Meeting-House, meerly for Reading; for we
 " knew of no Minister in the World whom we could
 " get to preach to us according to our Liking; and
 " having never been accustomed to social extempore

" Prayer,

“ Prayer, none of us durst attempt it in Company. By
 “ this single Mean sundry were solemnly awakened, and
 “ their Conduct ever since is a living Attestation of the
 “ Continuance and happy Issue of their Impressions.
 “ When the Report of these Sermons and the Effects
 “ occasioned by reading them was spread Abroad, I was
 “ invited to several Places to read them, at a consider-
 “ able Distance ; and by this Means the Concern was
 “ propagated.

“ About this Time, our absenting our selves from
 “ Church, contrary, as was alledged, to the Laws of the
 “ Land, was taken Notice of ; and we were called up-
 “ on by the Court to assign our Reasons for it, and to
 “ declare what Denomination we were of. As we knew
 “ but little of any Denomination of Dissenters, except
 “ Quakers, we were at a Loss what Name to assume.
 “ At length recollecting that *Luther* was a noted Re-
 “ former, and that his Doctrines were agreeable to our
 “ Sentiments, and had been of special Service to us, we
 “ declared our selves *Lutherans* ; and thus we conti-
 “ nued 'till Providence afforded us an unexpected Op-
 “ portunity of hearing the Rev Mr. *William Robinson*.

Here Sir, it may be proper for me to lay aside the Person of my Informer for a while, and interrupt the Connection of his Relation, to give you some Account of the Travels & Successes of that zealous, faithful and laborious Minister of Christ, the late Mr. *Robinson*, whose dear Memory will mingle with my softest & most grateful Thot's, as long as I am capable of Reflection. He was in the Ministry about six Years, and never took the Charge of a Congregation 'till a few Months before his happy and triumphant *Exit*. The necessitous Circumstances of many Vacancies, and the Prospect of more extensive Usefulness engaged him to expose his shattered Constitution, to all the Hardships & Fatigues of almost uninterrupted Itinerations ; and it has been my Lot to trace his Travels in sundry Parts of *Pennsylvania*, *Mary-*
land,

Land and Virginia; and I cannot recollect one Place in which he had officiated for any Time, where there were not some illustrious Effects of his Ministry. He had a noble disinterested Ambition to preach the Gospel, where Christ was not named; and therefore, by the Permission of the Presbytery, he took a Journey thro' the new Settlements in *Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North-Carolina*, in which he continued about two Years, oppres'd with the usual Difficulties a weakly Constitution finds in travelling a Wilderness, and animated only by his glorious Successes. He continued for some Time in *Lunenburg*, a County about 100 Miles S. W. of this, where (as I shall have Occasion to observe more fully hereafter) a small Number of *Presbyterians* from the northern Colonies were settled, intermixt with a Number of loose *Virginians*; and there he was the happy Instrument of reclaiming many tho'tless Creatures, and founding a flourishing Congregation. In *Amelia* also, a County somewhat nearer this than the former, his Labours were extensively bless'd; and while he was there, or near it, some of the People in *Hanover* having had some imperfect Information of him, sent him an Invitation to come and preach to them, tho' they knew very little of his Character or Method of Preaching, only that it was uncommon & tended to awaken People. They ventured to make an Appointment for him to preach at their *Reading-House* (if I may so call it) before they received any Promise from him by their Messenger; and with much Difficulty he came against the Day appointed. Some of the People were anxious to discover his Principles privately in the Morning before he was to preach; but knew not how, 'till they fell upon the Device of asking his Opinion of some Books they approved of. Upon his declaring his Approbation of these Tests of Orthodoxy, they were transported with the most pleasing Expectations, and with eager Impatience attended him to the Place where he was to preach.

I shall now re-assume the Person of my Informer, and proceed in his Narrative——“On the 6th of July—43,
 “ Mr. Robinson preached his first Sermon to us from
 “ Luk. 13. 3. and continued with us preaching four
 “ Days successively. The Congregation was large the
 “ first Day ; and as the Report of him spread, it vastly
 “ encreas’d on the three ensuing. ’Tis hard for the
 “ liveliest Imagination to form an Image of the Condi-
 “ tion of the Assembly on these glorious Days of the
 “ Son of Man. Such of us as had been hungring for
 “ the Word before, were lost in an agreeable Confusion
 “ of various Passions, surprized, astonished, pleased,
 “ enraptured ! so that we were hardly capable of Self-
 “ Government, and some could not refrain from pub-
 “ licly declaring their Transport : we were overwhelm-
 “ ed with the Tho’ts of the unexpected Goodness of
 “ God, in allowing us to hear the Gospel preached in
 “ a Manner that surpassed even our former Wishes, and
 “ much more our Hopes. Many that came thro’ Cu-
 “ riosity were *pricked to the Heart* ; and but few in the
 “ numerous Assemblies on these four Days appeared
 “ unaffected. They returned astonished, alarmed with
 “ Apprehensions of their dangerous Condition, con-
 “ vinced of their former entire Ignorance of Religion,
 “ and anxiously enquiring, what they should do to be
 “ saved ; and there is Reason to believe there was as
 “ much Good done by these four Sermons, as by all
 “ the Sermons preached in these Parts before or since.

“ Before Mr. Robinson left us, he successfully endea-
 “ voured to correct some of our *Antinomian* Mistakes,
 “ and to bring us to carry on the Worship of God more
 “ regularly at our Meetings. He advised us to meet to read
 “ good Sermons, and to begin & conclude with Prayer
 “ and singing of Psalms, which till then we had omitted.
 “ When we met next, we complied with his Directions ;
 “ and when all the rest refused, I read and prayed with
 “ Trembling and Diffidence ; which Method was ob-

“ served

" served in sundry Places 'till we were furnished with
 " a Minister. The Blessing of God remarkably at-
 " tended these more private Means ; and it was really
 " astonishing to observe the solemn Impressions begun
 " or continued in many, by hearing good Discour-
 " ses read. I had repeated Invitations to come to
 " many Places round, some of them 30 or 40
 " Miles distant, to read ; with which I generally
 " comply'd. Considerable Numbers were won't to at-
 " tend, with eager Attention and awful Solemnity ;
 " and sundry were, in a Judgment of Charity, thoro'ly
 " turned to God, and thereupon erected Meeting-
 " Houses, and chose Readers among themselves, by
 " which the Work was more extensively carried on.

" Soon after our Father, Mr. *Robinson*, left us, the
 " Rev. Mr. *John Blair* paid us a short Visit ; and truly
 " he came to us *in the Fulness of the Gospel of Christ*.
 " Former Impressions were ripened, and new formed
 " on many Hearts. One Night in particular a whole
 " House-full of People was quite over-come with the
 " Power of the Word, particularly of one pungent
 " Sentence that dropt from his Lips ; and they could
 " hardly sit or stand, or keep their Passions under any
 " proper Restraints, so general was the Concern during
 " his Stay with us ; and so ignorant were we of the
 " Danger Persons in such a Case were in of Apostacy,
 " which unhappy Observation has since taught us,
 " that we pleased our selves with the Expecta-
 " tion of the gathering of more *People to the divine*
 " *Sibboleth* than now seem to have been actually gathered
 " to him ; tho' there be still the greatest Reason to
 " hope that sundry bound themselves to the Lord in
 " an everlasting Covenant, never to be forgotten.

" Some Time after this, the Rev. Mr. *John Roan*,
 " was sent by the Presbytery of *New-Castle*, (under
 " whose immediate Care we had voluntarily placed our
 " selves to supply us.) He continued with us longer

" than

" than either of the former ; and the happy Effects of
 " his Ministrations are still apparent in many Instances.
 " He preached at sundry Places at the earnest Solici-
 " tations of the People, which was the happy Occasion
 " of beginning and promoting the religious Concern,
 " where there were little Appearances of it before.
 " This, together with his speaking pretty freely about
 " the Degeneracy of the Clergy in this Colony, gave a
 " general Alarm, and some Measures were concerted to
 " suppress us. To incense the Indignation of the Govern-
 " ment the more, a perfidious Wretch deposed, he heard
 " Mr. Roan use some blasphemous Expressions in his
 " Sermon, and speak in the most shocking & reproach-
 " ful Manner of the established Church. An Indict-
 " ment was thereupon drawn up against Mr. Roan, (tho'
 " by that Time he had departed the Colony) and some
 " of the People who had invited him to preach at their
 " Houses, were cited to appear before the General Court,
 " (which in this Government consists of the Governour
 " or Commander in Chief, and His Majesty's Council)
 " and two of them were fined twenty Shillings Sterling,
 " besides the Costs, which in one of the Cases would
 " have amounted to near fifty Pounds, had the Evidences
 " demanded their Due. While my Cause was upon
 " Trial, I had Reason to rejoice that the Throne of
 " Grace is accessible in *all Places*, and that helpless
 " Creatures can waft up their Desires *unseen*, to God, in
 " the midst of a Crowd. Six Evidences were cited to
 " prove the Indictment against Mr. Roan ; but their
 " Depositions were in his Favour ; and as for the Evi-
 " dence mentioned just now, who accused him of Blaf-
 " phemy against God and the Church, when he heard
 " of Messirs. G. Tennent's and S. Finley's Arrival, he
 " fled, and has not returned since ; so that the Indict-
 " ment was drop'd. I had Reason to fear being ba-
 " nished the Colony, and all Circumstances seem'd to
 " threaten the Extirpation of Religion among the Dissen-
 " ters in these Parts. " In

In these Difficulties we lay, without any Person of
 a publick Character to appear in our Favour ; where-
 upon we determined to acquaint the Synod of New-
 York with our Case ; hoping that a Synodical Repre-
 sentation of it to our worthy Governour, the Hon. Sir
 WILLIAM GOOCH, might free him from the Misin-
 formations under which he laboured, and procure
 us the Liberties granted to Protestant Dissenters by
 the *Act of Toleration*. Accordingly four of us went
 to the Synod, May 1745, when the Lord favour'd
 us with Success. The Synod being inform'd of our
 Difficulties, and presuming they might be removed
 by an impartial Representation of our Affairs, drew
 up an Address to our Governour, and sent the Rev.
 Messrs. G. Tennent and Samuel Finley to wait on his
 Honour to present it, and to officiate a few Days
 among us. Sir WILLIAM received them with Conde-
 scension & Respect, and granted them Liberty to preach
 in Hanover. By this Means the tremendous Cloud
 that hung over us was dissipated for a Time, & our
 languid Hopes were revived. Mr. Tennent and Mr.
 Finley continued with us about a Week, and tho' the
 Deluge of Passion in which we were at first over-
 whelmed, was by this Time somewhat abated ; yet
 much Good was done by their Ministry. The Peo-
 ple of God were refreshed, and sundry careles Sin-
 ners were awakened. Some that had confided before
 in their moral Conduct & religious Duties, were con-
 vinced of the Depravity of their Nature, and the Ne-
 cessity of being renewed in the Spirit of their Mind ;
 tho' indeed there were but few unregenerate Persons
 among us at that Time that could claim so regular
 a Character ; the Generality of Professors indulging
 themselves in criminal Liberties, and being remiss in
 the Duties of Religion ; which alas ! is too com-
 monly the Case still in such Parts of the Colony as
 the late Revival did not extend to.

“ After

" After these Gentlemen had left us, we continued
 " vacant for a considerable Time, and kept up our
 " Meetings for Reading and Prayer in sundry Places ;
 " and the Lord favoured us at these Occasions with his
 " gracious Presence. I was again repeatedly presented
 " and fined in Court for absenting myself from Church,
 " and keeping up unlawful Meetings, as they were
 " called ; but the Bush flourished in the Flames.

" The next that were appointed to supply us were the
 " Rev. Messirs. *William Tennent & Samuel Blair*. They
 " waited on the Governour, and readily obtained his
 " Permission to officiate among us. Their *Labours* were
 " not in vain in the Lord. They administered the Sacra-
 " ment of the Lord's Supper among us before their
 " Departure ; which was the first Administration of
 " that heavenly Ordinance among us since our dissent
 " from the Church of *England* ; and we have Reason to
 " remember it 'till our last Moments, as a most glori-
 " ous Day of the Son of Man. The Assembly was
 " large, and the Novelty of the Mode of Administra-
 " tion did peculiarly engage their Attention. The Chil-
 " dren were abundantly fed, and others were bro't to
 " hunger and thirst after Righteousness. It appeared as
 " one of the Days of Heaven to some of us ; and we
 " could hardly help wishing we could with *Joshua* have
 " delayed the Revolutions of the Heavens to prolong it.

" Messieurs *Tennent & Blair* continued with us about
 " a Fortnight, and immediately after their Departure,
 " Mr. *Whitefield* came and preached four or five Days
 " in these Parts ; which was the happy Means of giv-
 " ing us farther Encouragement, and engaging others
 " to the Lord, especially among the Church-People, who
 " received his Doctrines more readily than they would
 " from Ministers of the Presbyterian Denomination.

" After his Departure, we were destitute of a Min-
 " ister, and followed our usual Method of Reading and
 " Prayer at our Meetings, 'till the Rev. Mr. *Davies*,

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“ our present Pastor, was sent by the Presbytery to supply us about six Week, in Spring, Anno 1747, when our Discouragements from the Government were renewed and multiplied : For on one Sunday the Governor's Proclamation was set up at our Meeting-House, strictly requiring all Magistrates to suppress & prohibit, as far as they lawfully could, all itinerant Preachers, &c.” which occasion'd us to forbear Reading that Day, 'till we had Time to deliberate and consult what was expedient to do ; but how joyfully were we surprized before the next Sabbath, when we unexpectedly heard that Mr. Davies was come to preach so long among us ; and especially, that he had qualified himself according to Law, and obtained the Licensure of four Meeting-Houses among us, which had never been done before ! Thus when our Hopes were expiring, and our Liberties more precarious than ever, we were suddenly advanced to a more secure Situation. “ *Man's Extremity is the Lord's Opportunity.* ” For this reasonable Instance of the Interposition of divine Providence, we desire to offer our grateful Praises ; and we importune the Friends of Zion generously to concur in the delightful Employ.”

Thus, Sir, I have given you a brief Account of the Rise and Progress of Religion here 'till my first coming into the Colony ; and the Facts themselves I know to be well attested, tho' the Order in which I have related them, is in some Instances preposterous.—I shall now proceed in my Narrative from my own Knowledge, and inform you of the State of Affairs since April 1747.

The Dissenters here were under peculiar Disadvantages for want of a settled Minister. By this they were not only deprived of the stated Ministrations of the Gospel, but also exposed to great Difficulties from the Government, which could not be wholly removed while they continued vacant ; for it was alledged, (this is no proper Place to enquire with how much Law or Reason) that

that 'till they were an organized Congregation, and had a Minister qualified, and their Meeting-Houses licens'd, according to Law, they could not claim the Liberties and Immunities of the Act of Toleration. Besides, the Itinerations of my Brethren, tho' occasioned by Necessity, were misconstrued, as turning all Things upside down, as a meer Artifice to wheedle People out of their Money, and as an Evidence there were such prodigious Swarms of us to the Northward, that we were obliged to make Excursions into distant Parts : When indeed the chief Reason was the small Number of our Ministers & Candidates, which was vastly disproportioned to the Vacancies in *Pennsylvania*, and much more to those in *Maryland* and *Virginia*, (not to mention the Discouragements that would be naturally suggested to young Ministers, at the Thoughts of removing to a strange Colony, separated from their Brethren, exposed to peculiar Fatigues, and the Embarrassments of so limitted and precarious a Toleration as they then had Reason to expect.) On these Accounts the Synod, and particularly the Presbytery of *New-Castle*, were very solicitous to settle a Minister among them as soon as possible. I was therefore sent by said Presbytery into *Hanover* at the Time mentioned above, both to officiate for some Time, and to see if my Way should be cleared to settle there. Upon my Arrival, I petitioned the General Court to grant me a License to officiate in and about *Hanover*, at four Meeting-Houses ; which after some Delay, was granted, upon my qualifying according to the Act of Toleration, i. e. taking the usual Oaths to His Majesty's Person and Government, getting the Meeting-Houses recorded, and subscribing the Articles of the Church of *England*, except the 34, 35, 36, and this Clause of the 20th, "The Church hath Power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and Authority in Controversies of Faith ; and

" yet"—

I preach'd frequently in *Hanover* and some of the adjacent Counties at this Time ; and tho' the Fervour of the late Work was considerably abated, and my Labours were not blessed with Success equal to those of my Brethren ; yet I have Reason to hope they were of Service in sundry Instances. I have conversed with a few since, that were awakened at that Time ; and sundry that had been under languishing Concern, were hastening to the Birth. The Importunities they used with me to settle were invincible ; and upon my Departure, they sent a Call for me to the Presbytery, which, with three besides, from other Places, all very necessitous, I took under Consideration. I was fully convine'd *Hanover* stood in greater Need of a Minister than any Place I knew ; and that if my Health permitted, and none of my Brethren could be prevailed upon to settle there, I could not refuse their Call consistently with Duty. After my Return from *Virginia*, I spent near a Year under melancholy and consumptive Languishments, which I certainly expected would have conveyed me into the eternal World ; and by this I hoped to be exempted from the disagreeable Obligation. In the Spring 1748, I began slowly to recover ; tho' I then looked upon it only as the Intermission of a Disorder that would finally prove mortal. But upon the Arrival of a Messenger from *Hanover*, I put my Life in my Hand, and determin'd to accept of their Call ; hoping I might live to organize the Congregation, and prepare the Way for some more useful Successor ; and willing to expire under the Fatigues of Duty, rather than in voluntary Negligence.— But I forget, Sir, that this Narrative may perhaps be presented to the Publick, and indulge myself in an *Egotism*, as tho' I were writing only to a Friend. The only Apology I can make is, that some of my personal Affairs are so interwoven with those of this Congregation, that I find it difficult to relate the latter, without using too great Freedoms in the former. However, you have

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my full Consent to obliterate whatever you think unworthy of a publick View.

My dearest Brother, the Rev. Mr. John Rodgers, was sent along with me to *Hanover*, to assist me for a few Sabbaths at my first Settlement. But when he offer'd himself in the General Court to take the Qualifications enjoined by Law, he was rejected, under Pretence that his Certificate not being granted by the Synod, and particularly that of *Philadelphia*, but only by the Presbytery, was insufficient, (tho' by the Bye, it was as sufficient as mine, which they had admitted ; and given according to universal President among Presbyterians) whereupon he was obliged to return without preaching but one Sermon.

On this Occasion, as well as all others, we had Reason to acknowledge with the most dutiful Gratitude, the Condescension and Clemency of the Hon. Sir WILLIAM GOOCH, our late Governour, who always discovered a ready Disposition to allow us all claimable Priviledges, and the greatest Aversion to persecuting Measures ; but considering the horrendous & shocking Reports spread Abroad concerning us by officious Malignants, it was no great Wonder the Council discovered a considerable Reluctancy to tolerate us. Had it not been for this, I perswade my self they would have shewn themselves the Guardians of our legal Priviledges, as well as generous Patriots to their Country ; which is the illustrious Character generally given them.

I observed, Sir, before, that I obtained the Licensure of four Meeting-Houses when I first came to the Colony. In October 1748, the People petitioned for the Licensure of three more, which with great Difficulty was obtained. Among these seven, I have hitherto divided my Time, in Proportion to the Number of Dissenters at each Meeting-House : Three of them lie in *Hanover* County, one in *Henrico* County, which lies Southward ; one in *Caroline* County, which lies Northward ; one in *Louisa* County,

County, situated to the Westward ; and one in *Goochland*, to the South-west of *Hanover*. The nearest are 12 or 15 Miles distant from each other, and the Extremes about 40. My Congregation is very much dispersed; and notwithstanding the Number of the Meeting-Houses, some live 20, some 30, and a few 40 Miles from the nearest. Were they all compactly situated in one County, they would be sufficient to form three distinct Congregations ; but in their present Situation, I believe they could constitute but two large ones, each capable of affording a competent Maintenance to a Minister. At the lower Meeting-House in *Hanover*, which I took more immediately as my Charge when I accepted their Call, there is a sufficient Number to form a large Congregation ; but as it lies between that in *Caroline*, and that in *Henrico* which are but weak, it would seem cruel to separate it from them, as they could not each of them maintain a Minister of their own. The People about the four upper Meeting-Houses are waiting for a Minister with impatient Eagerness, and intend to reduce their Houses into three.

Were you Sir, to preach at any of these Houses, where there is the smallest Number of Dissenters, you would imagine there was a sufficient Number of People to form a distinct Congregation at each of them ; for where there are not above 15 or 20 Families that have fully join'd with me, you'll see perhaps 4 or 500 Hearers, and sometimes twice that Number ; the Church-People in general being very eager to hear. This I looked upon at first as a meer Curiosity after Novelty ; but as it continues in general without Abatement, and in some Places seems to increase ; I cannot but look upon it as a happy Presage. This I have the more Reason to do now, as I have observed many of these neutral Hearers become at length thoroughly engaged, and sundry of them bro't to be solemnly tho'tful. I believe I could number up 50 or 60 Families, who have thus been hap-

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pily intangled in the Net of the Gospel by their own Curiosity, or some such Motive, since my coming here ; and I have Reason to hope, that were there another Minister settled here, it would cause a very great Addition to our Number. Indeed this appears to me the most promising Circumstance that at present attends us ; for alas ! there seems no great Prospect of the Conviction of those that are thoroughly proselyted, and yet have rested short of real Religion (tho' blessed be the Lord, a few of them are awakened now and then) but when any of these transient Hearers, that are at their own Disposal, and not under the Influence of their Relations, &c. who are already attached, do join with us, 'tis generally a Sign of some considerable Degrees of Conviction ; as the Epithet *New-Light* (the usual Brand with which we are here stigmatized) is so reproachful, that the Secure will not venture to incur the *Odium*.

There are about 300 Communicants in my Congregation, who make an external Profession of real Religion. I am not fond of publishing a Calculation of Christians ; as I am sensible of the Fallibility of my Judgment in such Cases : but it is impossible for a Heart anxious for the Salvation of Men, to deny itself the Comfort of counting up at Times the Number of those that appear such in a Judgment of rational Charity ; and I entertain the pleasing Hope that the greatest Number of these Communicants are sincere in their Profession, and shall *walk with Christ in White* in the Fields of immortal Glory. Besides these, there are many that are constant Hearers and cordial Proselytes, who thro' a consciousness of Unfitness, or excessive Scrupulosity, do not seek Admission as yet to the Lord's Table.

Ethiopia has also stretched forth her Hands unto God. There is a great Number of Negroes in these Parts ; and sometimes I see a 100 & more among my Hearers. I have baptized about 40 Adults of them within these three Years, upon their making such a Profession of saving

slaving Faith as I then judged credible. Some of them, I fear, have apostatized ; but others of them, I trust, will persevere to the End. I have had as satisfactory Evidences of the sincere Piety of sundry of them, as ever I had from any Person in my Life ; and their artless Simplicity, their passionate Aspirations after Christ, their incessant Endeavours to learn and do the Will of God, have charmed my very Soul. But alas ! while my Charge is so extensive, and my Labours parcelled out among so many, I cannot take sufficient Pains with them for their Instruction ; which often oppresses my Heart.

There have been, Sir, a few Instances of unhappy Apostacy among us ; but I count it a peculiar Blessing, that there have not been so many Backsliders here, in Proportion to the Number once awakened, as I have generally observed in other Places, where there has been a great religious Commotion.

There are a few that I know of at present under deep and promising Impressions, and sundry languishing under feeble Convictions : But in general, a lamentable Security prevails ; and, as it generally happens in a Time of the Withdrawment of the divine Presence, the faint Impressions that are made on some by the Dint of Preaching, soon wear off.—Oh ! for a *little Revival in our Bondage !* In this Prayer Sir, I doubt not but you will heartily join, and endeavour to procure the Concurrence of others in so seasonable a Petition.

Last Sabbath I administered the Lord's Supper at one of my Meeting-Houses ; and there appeared more Solemnity and Affection in the numerous Assembly, than I have seen for some Months.

I might Sir, have given you a *particular Account of the Conversion of some Persons here* ; as indeed there are some uncommon Instances of it : but it would occupy too much of my Time, and swell this History to an excessive Bulk. It may suffice in general to observe,

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that abstracting peculiar Appendages and in different Circumstances, the Work of Conversion here has been generally carried on in those Steps that are described by experimental Divines, as *Alliene, Shepherd, Stoddard, Flavel, &c.* And there's nothing confirms me more in the Truth of their Notions of experimental Piety, than the universal Uniformity and Agreement in Substance of the Exercises of those that can make the fairest Claim to saving Grace, however different their Residences, Education, external Means, &c. be.

There is one *Isaac Oliver* here, a Miracle of a Man, whose History, could I write it intelligibly to you, would be very entertaining. He has been deaf & dumb from his Birth, and is now grown up to Manhood. The want of these Faculties rendered him wholly incapable of all humane Converse & Instruction, except by Signs ; and as for the most of divine Things, they seem to me of so abstract and spiritual a Nature, that the first Notions of them can never be conveyed by this obscure Medium : And yet (I mention it with grateful Wonder) I have the utmost Reason to believe he is truly gracious, and also acquainted with most of the Doctrines of Christianity, and many Matters of Fact related in the historical Part of the Bible. I my self have seen him represent the Crucifixion of Christ, the Swallowing and Ejection of *Jonah* by the Whale, &c. in such significant Signs, that I could not but understand them. Some of his Signs whereby he described Heaven and Hell were also intelligible to me ; but many of them about other Things, I could make nothing of. Those that live in the House with him, can hold an intelligible Conversation with him, and he with them, upon most of Things, with surprizing Readiness ; and he undoubtedly has the most significant Gestures of any Man I ever saw in my Life, which his Relations understand by repeated Observation, and use them to communicate their Tho's to him. There is so much of the devout Ardour of his

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Soul discovered in them at Times, as is really affecting ; and I have seen him converse in Signs about the Love and Sufferings of Christ, 'till he has been transported with Earnestness, and dissolved into affectionate Tears. The above Mr. *Morris*, with whom he lives, has told me, that *Isaac* informs him he had these Discoveries of divine Things made to him while in Bed, probably in a Dream ; and that eight Years ago he appeared remarkably changed in Temper and Conduct. He seems ever since very conscientious in the whole of his Behaviour ; generally delights to attend public & domestic Worship, tho' he cannot hear a Word ; and is observed sometimes to retire for secret Devotion ; tho' he signifies that he is praying with his Heart, when about his Business, or in Company ; which is peculiarly practicable to him, as in all Places he enjoys the undisturbed Serenity of Retirement. He discovers an expert Genius in those Things he is capable of, particularly in sundry mechanical Employments ; and his Passions seem very vigorous : in any passionate Emotions, his whole Visage and all his Gestures are surprizingly expressive of the Temper of his Mind ; so that he seems to stand in the least Need of the Faculty of Speech of any Man I have known. ——I could relate sundry other remarkable Peculiarities concerning him ; but as they are unintelligible to my self, or might seem incredible to those that are unacquainted with him, I omit them.* So much, however,

* 'Tis the general Opinion of those that are acquainted with him, and especially of the Family where he lives, who have best Opportunities of observing him, that he can read. The first Evidence of it appeared when he seemed to be first under religious Impressions ; for he was then observed to be frequently taking the Bible and looking into it : and ever since, he gives the following Evidences of it : He frequently looks into the Bible, or other good Books, with great Intenseness ; and sometimes points with his Finger to some particular Sentences, and tries to persuade others to read them ; and these Sentences, as

however, I know of him, that I cannot but look upon him as a miraculous Monument of almighty Grace, that can perform its beneficent Purposes on Mankind, notwithstanding the greatest natural or moral Impediments ; and I submit it to others Judgment, whether a Person so incapable of external Instructions, could be brought to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven any other Way than by immediate Revelation. — Besides the People here, sundry of my Brethren, who have been here, particularly the Rev. Messirs. *Samuel Blair* and *John Roan*, can attest this Relation ; tho' to some it may appear an hyperbolical Affectation of the *Marvellous* ; or the Effect of popular Superstition, which is wont to ascribe something prophetick or divine to those that labour under such natural Defects.

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the Family tells me, are peculiarly affecting, and worthy of distinct Notice. If you put a Book into his Hand inverted, he will immediately turn it into a proper Position. When a History, or the like, is put into his Hand, after looking into it a little while, he throws it away with Signs of its Uselessness ; but give him a Bible, tho' it were of a Size and Character he never saw before, or some other good Book upon religious Subjects, he hugs it in his Bosom with Signs of the most endeared Approbation. He intimates by Signs, that the Almanack treats of the Sun, Moon and Stars, the Weather, &c. I have opened the Bible in *Jonah*, and shewn it him ; and after a little Perusal, he has given me a very lively Description of the Fate of that Prophet. — Many other such Things are observable concerning him ; but whether these are sufficient Indications that he can read, and whether they are fit to be offered to public View, is wholly submitted to your Judgment. If he can receive Ideas from visible Characters, which to him cannot be the Signs of Words or Sounds, it must be entirely miraculous. Every One must see, that no Methods could be used to teach one to read, who has been entirely deaf and dumb from the first Point of his Existence : And tho' we should suppose him to have as expert a Genius as the first Inventors of Characters as the Signs of Words ; yet, as he is wholly ignorant of the Nature of Language, it appears inconceivable to me how he could possibly find out the arbitrary Connection between Letters and Ideas, without the Medium of Words. But is there any Thing too hard for the Lord ? —

I forgot to inform you, Sir, in its proper Place, that the Rev. Mr. Davenport was sent by the Synod to Hanover last Summer, & continued here about 2 Months. There appeared some Evidences then, and I have discovered more since, that he did not labour in vain. Some were brought under solemn Impressions, which seem to have a happy Issue ; and many of the Lord's People were much revived, and can never forget the Instrument of it.

Thus, dear Sir, I have given you a brief Narrative of the Rise and Progress of Religion among us ; and I doubt not but you will readily acquiesce in the Conclusion which after sufficient Scrutiny I have drawn, *That this is the Lord's Doing.* I claim no *Infallibility* ; but I must not under the modest Pretence of renouncing it, scruple a Matter attested with all possible Evidences, and so rush into *Septicism*. If I could form no Judgment of so public a Work, I should renounce my Function this Moment ; for with what Face can I pretend to promote a divine Work in the Conversion of Men, if I cannot have any *satisfying* Knowledge of it, when it appears ? I act in the Dark, and promote I know not what. Indeed the Evidence of its Divinity here is so irresistible, that it has extorted an Acknowledgement from some, from whom it could hardly be expected. The Rev. Mr. John Thomson, who, tho' a Man of Judgment, and, I hope, Piety, unhappily opposed the late Revival in *Pennsylvania* with the most industrious Zeal, has repeatedly declar'd, " That whatever our Ministers had done elsewhere, they have undoubtedly done MUCH GOOD in *Hanover* ; and that he heartily rejoiced in it." Were your Soul, Sir, contracted with the narrow Spirit of a Bigot, you would no doubt indulge an ignoble Joy at the Tho't, that there are now some Hundreds of Dissenters in a Place where a few Years ago there were not ten that I know of within a hundred

hundred Miles ; * but I assure my self of your Congratulations on a nobler Account, because a considerable Number of perishing Sinners are gained to the blessed Redeemer, with whom, tho' you never see them in these Regions of Mortality, you may spend a blissful Eternity in the divinest Intimacy, and mutually assist each other in ascribing immortal Praises to *the Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed his People by his Blood, out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People, and Nation.* — After all, poor *Virginia* demands your Compassion ; for Religion at present is but like the little Cloud which *Elijah's Servant* saw ; and sometimes I am afraid of its unseasonable Dissipation. Oh ! that it may spread, and cover the Land, and drop down Fatness upon it ! and may the Lord keep us from despising the Day of small Things !

'Tis likely, Sir, you may desire some Account of the State of Religion in other Counties where Dissenters are settled ; and therefore, as I have undertaken this History, and as I know not any other Way in which you may receive as full Information, I shall endeavour to gratify you.

There is an immense Quantity of Land unsettled to the Westward of *Hanover*, between this and *Mississippi*-River ; to which People from most of the Northern Colonies, particularly from *Pennsylvania* and *New-Jersey*, are yearly removing in vast Multitudes. The three Frontier Counties of this Colony, *Frederick*, *Augusta*, and *Lunenburg*, which are prodigiously large, are chiefly inhabited by such ; especially *Augusta*, in which there are

* There are and have been in this Colony a great Number of Scotch Merchants, who were educated Presbyterians ; but (I speak but what their Conduct more loudly proclaims) they generally upon their Arrival here, prove Scandals to their Religion and Country by their loose Principles and immoral Practices, and either fall into an Indifferency about Religion in general, or affect to be polite by turning Deists, or fashionable by conforming to the Church.

are very few others. There is also a considerable Number of them in *Amelia County* and *Albemarle*. They are generally *Irish People*, and were educated in the *Presbyterian Religion*, and have seen no Reason to change their Religion with their Residence. As their Encouragement tends to the great Advantage of the Colony, and there are but few *Virginians* among them, especially in *Augusta* and *Frederick*, to be proselyted ; the Council, (who, I verily believe, are possess'd with a noble Spirit of Patriotism to promote the temporal Welfare of their Country) have given them, or the Ministers that have officiated among them, but little Molestation. There are two Congregations of them, one in *Albemarle*, and one in *Augusta County*, belonging to the Synod of *Philadelphia*, that have Ministers settled among them : but those that have put themselves under the Care of *New-Castle Presbytery* belonging to the Synod of *New-York*, (which are vastly more numerous) notwithstanding their zealous and repeated Endeavours, are still destitute of Ministers, by Reason of the Scarcity of Ministers and Multitude of Vacancies in said Presbytery. They are sufficiently numerous to form 5 distinct Congregations, three at least in *Augusta*, one in *Frederica*, and one at least in *Lunenburg* and *Amelia*. The only Method our Presbytery has been capable to take to supply them, is, to send some of its Members or Candidates to officiate transiently among them, as long and as frequently as the Circumstances of their own Congregations or of other Vacancies would permit ; but notwithstanding all the Supplies they could obtain this Way, some of them, particularly *Lunenburg*, have been above a Year together without one Sermon. I hope that one of them may obtain a settled Minister soon, as I am told, there is a pious popular Youth, || sent by *New-Brunswick Presbytery* among them, whose Heart seems disposed to

|| The Rev. Mr. John Todd.

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to settle somewhere in *Virginia* : But truly, Sir, I have no Prospect how the rest shall be furnished with stated Ministers ; for I can now count up at least 6 or 7 vacant Congregations in *Pennsylvania*, and 2 or 3 in *Maryland*, besides the 5 mentioned in the Frontier Counties of *Virginia*, and a Part of my Congregation, which I would willingly declare vacant, had they Opportunity of obtaining another Minister : * And there are but 12 Members in *New-Castle* Presbytery, each of whom has a stated Charge ; and two or three Candidates, who are pre-engaged to vacant Congregations in *Pennsylvania* : From whence you may easily calculate the Disproportion of our Ministers to the Vacancies. Our Number indeed has been increased of late Years by the Licensure of sundry pious Youth, who make up the most of the Number mentioned ; and I have the pleasing Prospect of the Licensure of 3 or 4 more within a few Years : But our Vacancies increase almost as fast as our Ministers, by the Settlement of new Places, or by the breaking out of religious Concern in Places where there were little or no Appearances of it before ; upon which they generally apply to our Presbytery : And the Lord removes from us all Occasion to boast of our Number, by advancing some of our most useful Members, in the Bloom of Life, and in the midst of their Successes, from their painful Labours below, to join the Church triumphant in eternal Rest. Mr. *Robinson* and Mr. *Dean*, led the Way ; and I have lately had the melancholy Account, that the great Mr. *Samuel Blair*, the brightest Light in these Parts of *Zion*, is just on the Wing to follow.—*My Father ! my Father ! the Chariots of Israel,*
and

* There are perhaps 20 or 30 Places where there is a Number of Families thirsting after the Word, besides these mentioned ; which require transient Supplies ; but as they are not yet sufficient to form distinct Congregations, and maintain Ministers of their own, I have not numbered them among the vacant Congregations.

and the Horsemen thereof ! The very Tho't strikes a Terror to the Friends of Zion. * On these Accounts, Sir, I am afraid the most of these Vacancies in Virginia, cannot be settled with Ministers from New-Castle Presbytery this considerable Time ; which is the more affecting, as they have been destitute these 8 or 10 Years, i.e. since their first Settlement. You may easily conjecture I mention this as an Inducement to faithful Ministers from New-England and elsewhere, where they may be spared, to come into our Macedonia to help us.

Tho'

* Upon my receiving this mournful Information about a Month ago by common Fame and Letters from my Correspondents in Pennsylvania, I could not but indulge my unpractis'd Muse in the following abrupt Excursions ; which you may allow a Place in the Margin, if you think they will afford any proper Entertainment to the Reader, and that this is a suitable Place for them,

WHAT melancholy News does distant Fame,
To anxious Crowds, and my shock'd Ears proclaim!
With what strange Pannic is each Bosom struck,
As tho' some Pillar of the Heav'ns were broke !
Alas ! is Blair the great, unrival'd Blair,
Most dear to All, but Oh ! to me more dear ;
My Father ! Tutor ! Friend ! each tender Name,
That can the softest, tend'rest Passions claim !
My faithful Guide to Science and to Truth,
In the raw Years of unexperienc'd Youth ;
Ah ! is the heav'nly Man just on the Wing,
And to his long'd-for Skies about to spring ?
About to leave us mourning here below,
And 'mongst us share the Remnant of his Wo ?
Ah ! does he pine away in *hectic* Fire, ||
Anhelant, panting, ready to expire ?
Oh ! cruel Fame ! why didst thou haste thy Flight,
To bring the inauspicious News to Light ?
Ah ! cruel Correspondents ! to reveal
The dismal Tidings, Love would fain conceal.
Why did not Tears blot out th' Intelligence ?
Or your sad Hands tremble to guide your Pens ?

|| His Illness is suppos'd to be of a consumptive Nature.

Tho' these Congregations have been hitherto destitute
of the stated Ministrations of the Gospel ; yet the Iter-
nations of my Brethren among them, have been at-
tended with very considerable Success. Mr. Robinson,
as I intimated before, took a Tour thro' these Frontier
Counties, and into North-Carolina, about seven Years
ago. He underwent great Hardships in Carolina, with-
out much Success, by Reason of the Fewness of the In-
habitants at that Time ; who were generally such un-
cultivated Savages, that there was little Prospect of

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Oh ! had you not the mournful News divulg'd ;
My Mind had still the pleasing Dream indulg'd,
Still fancy'd *Blair* with Health and Vigour bless'd,
With some grand Purpose lab'ring in his Breast ;
In studious Tho't pursuing Truth divine,
'Till the full Demonstration round him shine ;
Or from the sacred Desk, proclaiming loud,
His Master's Message to th' attentive Crowd ;
While heav'nly Truth with bright Conviction glares,
And coward Error shrinks and disappears ;
While quick Remorse the hardy Sinner feels,
And Calv'ry's Balm the bleeding Conscience heals.

But now, alas ! the sweet Delusion's fled ;
My *Blair* is dying, or perhaps is dead ;
Or hastening to the calm celestial Shore ;
Or safe arriv'd, and all the Dangers o'er.
Ev'n now perhaps, releas'd from cumbrous Clay,
His Soul expatiates in immortal Day.

Pardon, bless'd Shade ! the Ravings of my Love,
That would recall thee from the Bliss above ;
Would wish thee down in these sad Realms again,
From Choirs of Angels, to converse with Men ;
Ungrateful Men ! who broke thy Heart, and long
Withstood the strong Perswasion of thy Tongue ;
Baffled thy Love, and Vanity pursu'd,
Deaf to thy Calls, deaf to a Saviour's Blood !

Oh ! might'st thou from the Dead return again,
And that strange unknown World disclose to Men !
Apostles from the Dead sure could not preach in vain,
Superfluous Wish ! what couldst thou teach us more,
Than thy divine Discourses did before ?

doing them much Service without continuing a long Time among them to teach them the first Rudiments of Christianity ; and so scattered, that but very few of them could convene in one Place to hear. The Case is indeed happily altered there since that Time, as the Inhabitants are vastly more numerous, and some Persons that had a religious Education are settled among them. A new Congregation, I think upon *Pee-dee River*, sent a Petition to me last Year to be presented to *New-Castle Presbytery* for a Minister, subscribed by more than a Hundred

But if in mortal Climes be still thy stay,
 Oh ! can our Pray'rs the fatal Hour delay ?
 Prevail with Heav'n to spare thy sacred Breath,
 And snatch thee from th' impending Grasp of Death ?

Come, Saints, your Importunities renew ;
 Try what th' united Force of fervent Pray'r can do,
 Believing Prayer, eternal Truth has sworn,
 Sh'an't pant in vain, but bring a rich Return.
 'Twill gain this Blessing from propitious Heav'n ;
 Or greater, if a greater can be giv'n.

" Thou sovereign Arbiter of Life and Death,
 " At whose almighty Nod we catch and yield our Breath ;
 " Whose Fiat organiz'd our mortal Clay,
 " And can repair it in its last Decay,
 " And from the greedy Grave snatch the expected Prey.
 " Oh ! hear the bursting, deep, united Groan,
 " That from ten Thousand Hearts arises to thy Throne,
 " Restore our Prophet ! --- Best for him, 'tis true,
 " To die ; but Oh ! what shall poor Zion do ?
 " Zion whose Foes are many, Friends are few.
 " See ! how she languishes in plaintive Grief ;
 " By Blair's Recovery only hopes Relief.
 " Where shall the wounded, tortur'd Conscience find,
 " A healing Hand so skilful and so kind ?
 " Where heav'nly Truth so firm an Advocate ?
 " Or dubious Minds so certain Conduct get ?

" Restore our Prophet, and his Health renew ;
 " For Oh ! we need him more than Heav'n can do ;
 " There Myriads of Thy Ministers of Flame
 " Perform Thy Orders, and adore Thy Name ;

" But

Hundred Persons, chiefly Heads of Families ; and one of my Correspondents there informs me, that they are very sufficient to maintain a Minister. Our Presbytery appointed Mr. James Finley to visit them ; but by Indisposition he was prevented ; so that they have lain wholly destitute hitherto, and are like to do so, unless they can obtain some foreign Assistance, besides what our Presbytery can afford them. Besides this, I hear of sundry other Places in *North-Carolina*, that are ripening very fast for the Gospel : And Oh ! that the Lord would *THRUST forth Labourers into that Part of his Harvest* ; for I am afraid but few will go thither, 'till they are *thrust* and constrained by an irresistible Zeal, and a providential Concurrence of Circumstances.—

“ But here, alas ! how few prepar'd like Blair,
 “ Thy sacred Message to the World to bear ?
 “ With equal Skill eternal Things to shew ?
 “ And guide thy Churches militant below ?
 “ Restore our Prophet, Lord ! and in his stead
 “ Let worthless me be to the Skies convey'd :
 “ Thy earthly House such useless Lumber may
 “ Resign ; but Oh ! snatch not our Blair away.”

But even his Worth now bids us to despair,
 And threatens the Denial of our Pray'r ;
 His Worth that makes his sacred Life so dear.
 So great, so heav'ly, so refin'd a Mind,
 Demands Employment of a nobler Kind.
 What Earth could teach, he learn'd, and now must rise,
 To a superior Class above the Skies.
 Too much refin'd in this dark World to bear
 The humble Place of Zion's Minister,
 Heav'n calls him to sustain some nobler Function there ;
 With Gabriel to perform the Orders giv'n,
 And bear JEHOVAH's Errands thro' the Vast of Heav'n ;
 Prompt as th' Angelic Armies to obey,
 Fervent and bright and vigorous as they.
 Heav'n kind to him, will not consent to hear,
 Nor curse him with the Answer of our Pray'r—&c.

But I find I must suppress the rest, lest I tire you,
 and lose the Historian in the Poet.

Mr. Robinson continued, I think, his Sabbaths in Lexington and Amelia, and left sundry spiritual Children there behind him. A considerable Number of Virginians, who knew nothing of real Religion before, were awakened by his Ministry; and their Conduct since gives Ground for a charitable Judgment concerning them. Sundry also that had removed thither from the Northward, and had a religious Education, and a System of orthodox Principles, were convinced of their unregenerate Condition, and that they had had but a *Form of Godliness without the Power*, who now appear solid Christians.—At their repeated Solicitations, I spent about a Fortnight preaching among them the Beginning of this Month [June]; and tho' they seem sensibly languishing for the Want of the Means of Grace, yet sundry give agreeable Evidences of real Religion; and there is a Prospect of doing much Service, were they furnished with a faithful Minister. I met with most Encouragement in a Part of *Amelia County*, where very few had heard any of my Brethren. The Assemblies were large even on Week Days, and sometimes there appeared much Solemnity and Affection among them. There appears the greatest Probability, that if they had faithful Preaching frequently, many of them would be turned to the Lord; and it was really afflictive to me, that the Necessity of my own Congregation constrained me to leave them so soon, and refuse sundry Invitations they gave me to preach in other Places in the County. I believe another Congregation would soon be gathered there, had they frequent Preaching.

In *Augusta*, there is a great Number of solid and warm Christians; some of whom were such when they came thither, & others have experienced a happy Change since. There was a pretty general Awakening there some Years ago under the Ministry of Mr. *Dean* (now at Rest) and Mr. *Byram*; the Effects of which in sundry Instances are still apparent; and the Itinerations of most

most of my Brethren before & since, have been bless'd with Success. I believe three Ministers might live very comfortably among them.

I have no general Acquaintance in *Frederick County*, tho' I have pass'd thro' it, and preached frequently in some Parts of it : but I am credibly informed by such of my Brethren as have been often there, that there has been a considerable Awakening there some Years ago, which has had a blessed Issue in many, and that the Congregation is in promising Circumstances, and has been endeavouring, tho' unsuccessfully, to obtain a Minister, for sundry Years.

You will no doubt, be glad to have some certain Information of the State of Religion in *Maryland* ; and therefore, tho' I now live at a great Distance from the Places there where it flourishes, yet as I preached at most of them formerly, when the religious Commotion was at its Height, and as I have heard of no remarkable Alterations in them since, I shall give the following concise Account ; which you may depend upon as true.

There has been a considerable *Revival* (shall I call it ?) or *first Plantation* of Religion in *Baltimore County*, which lies along *Susquehannah River*, bordering on *Pennsylvania*, where, I'm informed, Mr. *Whittlesey* (with whom I find, you are acquainted) is like to settle.— Of this Mr. *S. Blair*, if I remember rightly, gives an Account in, *The Christian History* ; and therefore I shall say no more of it.

In *Kent County* and *Queen Ann's*, which lie between *Cheasapeak Bay* and *Delaware*, a Number of carelefs Sinners have been awakened and hopefully brought to Christ. The Work was begun and chiefly carried on by the Instrumentality of that favoured Man Mr. *Robinson* ; whose Succeſs, whenever I reflect upon it, astonishes me. Oh ! he did much in a little Time ; and who would not chuse so expeditious a Pilgrimage thro' this

this World ? There is in these Places a considerable Congregation ; and they have made repeated Essays to obtain a settled Minister, but are not like to succeed 'till our Number is increased.

There was a great Stir about Religion in a Place called *Buckingham*, on the Sea-shore, about four Years ago, when I was there ; but it was not then come to Maturity. It has spread since, and issued in a hopeful Conversion in sundry Instances ; and I am informed they are now sufficient to constitute a Congregation, and are waiting for a Minister.

But the most glorious Display of divine Grace in *Maryland* has been in and about *Somerset County*, which lies at some Distance from *Cheasapeak Bay* on the Eastern Shore. It began, I think, in the Year 1745, by the Ministry of Mr. *Robinson* ; and was afterwards carried on by sundry Ministers that preach'd transiently there. I was there about two Months, when the Work was at its Height ; and I never saw such a deep and spreading Concern among People in my Life as then appeared among them : The Assemblies were numerous, tho' it was in the Extremity of a cold Winter, and unweari'd in attending the Word ; and frequently there were very few among them that did not give some plain Indications of Distress or Joy. Oh ! these were the happiest Days that ever my Eyes saw, or are, as I fear, like to see. Since that, the Harvest seems over there ; tho' considerable Gleanings, I hear, are still gathered ; and many of the late Converts give the utmost Reason to presume their final Perseverance. There had been a Congregation of Presbyterians there for many Years ; but they were reduced almost to nothing before the late Revival ; when many of the Church-People were brought under deep Impressions, and cordially joined with them ; so that now they form at least one large Congregation ; and after many fruitless Attempts, they have lately been so happy as to obtain the Reverend

Reverend Mr. *Hugh Henry*, for their Minister, a Youth of a good Genius and undoubted Piety, who will I trust, be an extensive Blessing to that Part of the Colony.

I might, Sir, have been more particular on most of Things in this Narrative ; but as a *general View* may perhaps be sufficient to you and the Public, and is most convenient to me in my present Hurry, I have declined it.— The indigested Order and other Inaccuries you will easily discern, are proper Objects for your Candour and Generosity ; and I have no other Apology to make, but that the unavoidable Hurry of the Bearer on a Business of the greatest Importance to the Interest of Religion in *Virginia*, in which we doubt not of your hearty Concurrence, will not suffer me to transcribe this first Draft.

I shall prize it, dear Sir, as an inestimable Blessing, if you and others of the Lord's Servants and People in distant Parts, favour us with the Concurrence of your Prayers to promote the declining Work of Religion among us ; which is the only Way I can expect the Assistance of most of them.

The Constancy of your Correspondence, Sir, affords me peculiar Satisfaction in my present solitary Situation : And if any of the sacred Character, in any Parts of the Church where this Narrative may come, should condescend to favour me with their Correspondence, I should most gratefully acknowledge it, and make them the best Returns in my Power. Our Acquaintance with the State of the Church in various Parts, qualifies us to adapt our Prayers to it ; and therefore such mutual Intelligences may be of special Service to us in our Intercessions.

May

ZEPHYRUS A

May your divine Master bless you, dear Sir, and succeed your Ministrations! And may the Spirit be richly poured forth from on high on that favoured Land where you reside.

I am, **Reverend SIR;** Your very affectionate Brother,
Honover, and Servant,
June 28th 1751; **in the Kingdom and Patience**
of JESUS CHRIST.

SAMUEL DAVIES,



APPENDIX.

A P P E N D I X.

I At first intended, Sir, to have said Nothing of a particular Restraint impos'd upon us at present by the civil Government ; lest I should seem fond of raising the Cry of *Persecution*, which is very indecent in the Followers of the uncomplaining Lamb of God, especially when there is in Truth so little Occasion for it ; or to fling injurious Reflections on His Majesty's Council for this Colony, for whom I have the profoundest Veneration on Account both of their honourable Character and their Accomplishments for it ; and under whose indulgent Administration we enjoy so many civil and sacred Liberties.

But as I know not, Sir, but this Narrative may come into the Hands of some who may have some Influence to secure our Privileges, or procure their Enlargement, if it may be judged that we lie under any illegal Restraints ; and as the Matter is not only public in this Colony, but has been lately laid before the Government in *England* by the President & Council, for Advice ; I shall venture to give you the following short, simple Narrative of it ; without any tedious Argumentations upon it ; and without injurious Aspersions, which are far from my Heart.

The General Court, as I informed you, have licensed seven Meeting-Houses for me to officiate in ; and I should not desire to have their Number and my Fatigues encreased, were not the Circumstances of the Dissenters in *Virginia* extraordinary & peculiar. There are a few

of them in sundry Counties besides these in which the licensed Houses are, who are too weak to maintain a Minister of their own ; and were they never so able, they could not obtain one in the present Scarcity of Ministers. These have given me repeated and importunate Invitations to come and preach among them ; but I judged it imprudent to comply till the Places were legally licensed. Upon this some of them, with a View to obtain my Labours transiently among them, at least on Week Days, and the Visits of my Brethren in their Itinerations, have petitioned the Courts of their respective Counties for Licenses for Places convenient to them ; but they have either been denied, or the License granted by the County Court has been nullified by the Council ; which has discouraged others that they have made no Application. This is a Disadvantage to the People, not only as they are thereby deprived of the Preaching of the Word, but as they are expos'd to the intolerable Hardship of carrying their Children so great a Way to be baptized.

The Council has superseded a License granted by a County Court on the Presumption, “*That it does not belong to a County Court to proceed in such Affairs ; and, That a dissenting Minister has no legal Right to more Meeting-Houses than one :*” And these two Points have been submitted to the Determination of those to whose Province it belongs in *England* ; but no Answer is yet arriv’d.

The taking the Authority from County Courts of administering the legal Qualifications to Ministers and licensing Meeting-Houses, would be no great Disadvantage to us in *Hanover*, because we might easily apply to the Commander in Chief, or the General Court ; and therefore 'tis of small Importance with me how it be determined ; tho' it would occasion a considerable Difficulty to those that live 2 or 300 Miles distant from *Williamsburg*.

But

But the restraining a dissenting Minister to but *one* Meeting-House would be a prodigious Grievance to the People in their present Circumstances.—This, Sir, is not a proper Place to debate the Legality of it, nor does it belong to my Province to determine it ; yet I may inoffensively suggest the following Remarks upon it, as Matters of Speculation to the Curious, and of Determination to those in Authority.

His Majesty's private Instructions with Respect to Dissenters, to the Governour or Commander in Chief, (so far as I can recollect them from a transient View, which the Hon. Col. LEE, our late President favoured me with) run thus *verbatim*, “ You are to tolerate all “ Dissenters (except Papists) who lead [quiet and in-“ offensive Lives”]—But how can such Dissenters be tolerated, who by Reason of Weakness and the Scarcity of Ministers, cannot obtain a Minister of their own, unless they may legally share in the Labours of a Minister with other Places, which cannot be without a Plurality of Meeting-Houses under the Care of one Minister ?

The Act of Toleration (which has been received by our Legislature ||) does not determine the Number of Meeting-Houses, but only gives a general Toleration to legally qualified Ministers to officiate in Places legally licensed : And may it not be reasonably presumed from hence, That the *Number* is left to be determined according to the peculiar Circumstances of particular Congregations ? Farther ;

|| This Act was received *An. quart. Reginæ Annæ*, in these Words,
 “ If any Person being of the Age of twenty-one Years, or upwards, shall willfully absent him or herself from Divine Service at his or her Parish Church or Chapel, the Space of one Month, (EXCEPTING AS IS EXCEPTED IN AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT PASSED IN THE FIRST YEAR OF K. WILLIAM AND Q. MARY, entitled, *An Act for exempting their Majestys Protestant Subjects dissenting from the Church of England, from the Penalty of certain Laws*)—Every such Person—being lawfully convicted, by Confession, or otherwise,—shall forfeit and pay, for every such Offence, the Sum of Five Shillings, or fifty Pounds of Tobacco.”

Farther ; The said Act expressly says, — “ That all the Laws made and provided for the frequenting of divine Service on the Lord’s-Day, commonly called Sunday, shall be still in Force, and executed against all Persons that offend against the said Laws, except such Persons come to some Congregation or Assembly of religious Worship, allowed or permitted by this Act.” But how can Persons come to such Congregation or Assembly, unless a Place within their Reach be licensed for that Purpose ? If this Liberty be denied them, are they not obliged, according to *the Act of Toleration* it self, to attend constantly on Worship in the established Church ? And if so, where is their Toleration ?

Finally ; It is a very common Thing in this Colony, and allowed expressly by Law, that where the Parish is of great Extent, and cannot be divided into sundry, each of them capable to maintain a Minister, to erect 2, 3 or 4 Churches or Chappels of Ease, for the Conveniency of the Parish, where the Minister officiates alternately, or in Proportion to the Number of People : And since the Reason for a Plurality of Meeting-Houses among us, is the same ; why is it not equally legal ?—Sundry under Things might be suggested ; but I forbear.

I am, *ut anté.*



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